



## Central Shenandoah Health District

IN COOPERATION WITH THE STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **CENTRAL SHENANDOAH HEALTH DISTRICT ANNOUNCES A CONFIRMED CASE OF LA CROSSE ENCEPHALITIS**

(Staunton, Va.) - The Central Shenandoah Health District today announced the first confirmed human case of La Crosse Encephalitis in the district for this season. Laboratory samples have been tested and verified by the Virginia Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services.

The confirmed case involved a young child who was hospitalized, but has since recovered from the infection. Children under 16 years of age tend to be the most at risk for developing serious illness. In encephalitis the brain experiences swelling and that can be a life-threatening condition.

Only about 70 cases of La Crosse Encephalitis are reported in the United States per year. La Crosse Encephalitis is caused by a virus that is spread through the bite of particular species of mosquitoes. Both the "Eastern treehole mosquito" and "Asian tiger mosquito" are capable of spreading the virus can also breed in containers that catch and hold water around the house.

La Crosse Encephalitis is not a very common illness, but it is one that has been known to naturally occur in Southwest Virginia. The young child represents the most northern case of La Crosse Encephalitis in Virginia to date. This case and others that have occurred in recent years are revealing a change in the distribution of the La Crosse virus in Virginia and an increasing need for the entire district to take proper precautions.

"We are seeing an increase in mosquito-borne disease activity in Virginia, including West Nile virus, Eastern Equine Encephalitis, and La Crosse Encephalitis. This means people are at an increased risk of being bitten by an infected mosquito," said District Health Director Dr. G. Douglas Larsen. "People can reduce their risk of infection by eliminating mosquito breeding areas and protecting themselves from mosquito bites while outside."

Dr. Larsen said that the risk of mosquito-borne infections can vary with a person's age. "Many mosquito-borne viral infections cause no symptoms or only mild symptoms, some of the diseases like West Nile virus are more likely to cause illness in older people while La Crosse is almost exclusively seen in younger children. That means in our area everyone needs to pay attention to protecting themselves from mosquito bites as much as possible."

Dr. Larsen says this confirmed case of La Crosse Encephalitis reinforces the health department's message, "The Central Shenandoah Health District will continue to encourage individuals to protect themselves and encourage communities to conduct activities to control mosquito populations in our communities."

The Virginia Department of Health recommends the following tips to reduce exposure to mosquitoes:

- Wear long, loose and light-colored clothing.
- Use insect repellent products with no more than 50 percent DEET for adults and 10-30 percent for children. Follow instructions when using insect repellents.
- Turn over or remove containers in your yard where water collects, such as old tires, potted plant trays, buckets and toys.
- Eliminate standing water on tarps or flat roofs.
- Clean out birdbaths and wading pools once a week.
- Clean roof gutters and downspout screens regularly.

For more information on the La Crosse virus, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/arbor/lacfact.htm>.

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